

NEW WAY

TO KEEP A

WIFE AT HOME,

A

FARCE,

IN TWO ACTS;

ORIGINALLY WRITTEN

By the ingenious HENRY FIELDING,

And performed with universal Applause

AT THE

Theatre Royal, Drury-Lane;

With considerable Alterations and Additions,

BY

Walley Chamberlain Oulton, Esq;

(Author of the HAUNTED CASTLE, MAD HOUSE, &c.)

As performed at the

Theatre Royal, Smock-Alley.

WITH DISTINGUISHED APPLAUSE.

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M.DCC.LXXVI.



P R O L O G U E.

TO BE SPOKEN BY

P H E L I M O ' W H A C K ,

(*With a large Oak Stick in his Hand.*)

GOOD Night to you Honeys, arrah, how do you do?
By my soul that's unkind now from friends such as you,
Why laugh at my manners so *polite* and so *clever*?
But may be you'll say I'm a *blundering* fellow;
Behaste my *Salute* might appear 'farewell warning;
But why not GOOD NIGHT, *when we meet*, as GOOD
MORNING?

From which observation you plainly may see,
Other nations can *blunder* as ready as we.

But now to my errand—you must know two old
fellows,

Whom the devil has ta'en in his head to make jealous!
Have put here in practice a scheme ne'er yet known,
Of a *New* and a *safe Way*, to *Keep Wives at Home*!
By my soul they'll be puzal'd—for of all things that's
human

There's nothing more crafty than a rag'd marry'd woman.
Beware then ye *Bachelors*—bring here not your wives,
If you wish they'd e'er lead domestic sweet lives.

Nor you ye gay *fair ones*, who can't 'bide such rules,
By my soul, it is you, that can cheat such weak fools.

For your dear sakes alone—and my kind *maister* too }
(Captain *Rakel*, my jewels, who is dying for you.) }
I carry this cudgel to beat *them* black and blue.

And who knows but a twig of sweet Shillelagh may
Keep good *Men at Home*—(*flourishing his stick*) By my
soul that's my way.

Arragh, whats that I hear (*bell rings.*) it rings sure
for me:

And I'll answer it quickly, as you'll presently see;

But first as in duty, my obedience *here call*,

To salute Top and Bottom, the Middle and All.

[Exit.

Dramatis Personæ.

M E N.

Sir Nicholas Wisdom,	-	-	Mr. Moss.
Captain Rakel,	-	-	Mr. PAULET.
Phelim O' Whack,	-	-	Mr. OWENSON.
Mr. Tobias Softly,	-	-	Mr. CORNELLYS.
Sneaksby,	-	-	Mr. BARRETT.
Handy,	-	-	Mr. G. KING.
Constable,	-	-	Mr. LYNCH.

W O M E N.

Lady Charlotte Wisdom,	-	-	Mrs. CORNELLYS.
Betty	-	-	Mrs. O'NEIL.
Mrs. Softly,	-	-	Mrs. HEAPHY.

SERVANTS, &c.

~~THE NEW WAY TO KEEP A WIFE AT HOME~~

A
NEW WAY
TO KEEP
A WIFE AT HOME.

ACT I. SCENE I.

SCENE, *The Street.*

RAHEL, *solus.* [*Reading a Letter.*]

"SIR,

"YOUR late behaviour hath determined me never to see you more; if you get entrance into this house for the future, it will not be by my consent; for I desire you would henceforth imagine there never was any acquaintance between you and

Lucretia Sofly".

So! this letter was thrown out at the window—very strange—I have sent my Irish servant for the answer—I wonder he has not returned—ten to one the blundering dog has made some mistake.—Oh, here he comes.

Enter

A New Way to keep a Wife at Home.

Enter Phelim, with a Letter.

Phel. Oh, by my soul my jewel, I have it in black and white, how handy---the window gave you the first letter, but it is Phelim O'Whack, your humble servant, that gives you the answer. (gives it.)

Rak. Let's see, what does it say? [Reads.

"*BE here at the time you mention, my husband is luckily out of the way. I wish your happiness be (as you say) entirely in the power of*

Charlotte Wisdom."

Ay, now thou hast performed well indeed, and I'll give thee all the money I have in my pocket for an encouragement. Odsso! I have but six-pence about me-----here, take, take this and be diligent.

[Exit.

Phel. Very fine encouragement truly! This it is to serve a poor beggarly----- If half this dexterity had been employ'd in the service of a great man, I had been a Captain or a Justice of Peace long ago.-----But I must tug along the empty portmanteau of this shabby no-pay ensign. Pox on't, what can a man expect who is the rag-carrier of a rag-carrier? [Exit.

S C E N E, *Sir Nicholas Wisdom's House.*

Lady Charlotte Wisdom, and Captain Rakel discovered seated.

L. C. Wisd. Sure never any thing was so unlucky for us as this threatening letter: While my husband imagined I should go abroad, he was almost continually at home; but now he thinks himself secure of my not venturing out, he is scarce ever with me.

Rak. How shall I requite this goodness which can make such a confinement easy for my sake?

L. Char. The woman that thinks it worth her while to confine herself for her gallant, thinks herself sufficiently requited by his company.

Enter Betty.

Betty. Oh! Madam, here's my master come home: had he not quarrell'd with the footman at the door, he had certainly found you together.

Rak.

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Rak. What shall I do?

L. Char. Step into this closet [*Rakel goes into the closet.*] quick, quick, — what can have sent him home so soon?

Enter Sir Nicholas Wisdom,

L. Char. Oh! my dear! you are better than your word now; this is kind indeed to return so much earlier than your promise.

Sir N. Wisd. Mr. *Mortgageland* hath disappointed me; I'm afraid somebody else hath taken him off my hands; so let some of the servants get my night-gown and slippers, for I intend to stay at home all the evening.

L. Char. Was ever such ill-luck — they are both in my closet. — Lord, child, why will you put on that odious night-gown; indeed, it doesn't become you lovey, indeed it doesn't.

Sir Nich. Pshaw! it doesn't become a wife to dislike her husband in any dress whatsoever.

L. Char. Well, my dear, if you command, I will be always ready to obey. — *Betty*, go fetch your master's night-gown out of my closet — Take care you don't open the door too wide, lest you throw down a china basin that is just within it.

Sir Nich. Come, give me a kiss; you look very pretty to-night, you little wanton rogue. — Adod! I shall, I shall make thee amends at home for the pleasures you miss abroad.

L. Char. So, you won't put the money then where the rogues order you, and you'll have your poor wife murder'd to save two hundred guineas.

Sir Nich. If you stay at home, you will not be murder'd, and I shall save many a two hundred guineas.

L. Char. But then, I shall lose all my acquaintance by not returning their visits.

Sir Nich. Then I shall lose all my torments; and truly, if I owe this loss to the letter-writer, I am very much oblig'd to him.

Enter

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Enter Servant.

Serv. Mr. Softly, to wait on your honor.

Sir Nich. Shew him in.

[*Exit Serv.*]

Enter Mr. Softly.

Mr. Softly. Sir Nicholas, good to you. Lady Charlotte, I am your humble servant: A friend of yours, Sir Nicholas, expects you at Exchange Coffee-house.

Sir Nich. Nay then, I must leave thee for one hour, my dear. So, take the key of my closet and fetch me that bundle of parchments that lies in the bureau.

L. Char. I will, my dear. (*This is extremely lucky.*)

[*Exits into closet.*]

Sir Nicholas Wisdom, Mr. Softly.

Mr. Softly. Well, doth the plot succeed notably?

Sir Nich. To my wish. She hath not ventured to stir abroad since. This demand you haave drawn upon my wife, for 200l. will be of more service to me than a draught on the bank for so many thousands.

Mr. Softly. I wish your threatening letter to my wife had met with the same success: but, alack! it hath had a quite contrary effect.

Sir Nich. What do you intend to do?

Mr. Softly. I know not. Something I must, for my house at present is like a garrison, I have continually guards mounting and dismounting, while I know of no enemy but my wife, and she's within.

Enter Lady Charlotte.

L. Char. Here are the parchments, my dear.

Sir Nich. You know the necessity of my engagement, and will excuse me.

Mr. Softly. No ceremony with me, brother.

Sir Nich. If you will stay with my wife till my return, she will be much oblig'd to you: You may entertain one another at cards; you are no high player no more than I, so that you must expect the worst of the game, for she always beats me at *All Fours*. [Exit.]

Mr.

Mr. Softly. I am but a bad player, Lady Charlotte, but to divert you.

L. Char. How shall I get rid of him? (*aside.*) I am not much inclin'd to cards at present, Mr. Softly, for to be plain, I am obliged to write a letter to the country. I hope you'll excuse me.

Mr. Softly. Oh! dear sister! I will divert the time with one of these newspapers:—Ay, here's the Freeman's Journal—Pshaw, the playhouse benefits and parliamentary debates almost fill it.

L. Char. But—I am the worst person in the world at writing; the least noise disturbs me.

Mr. Softly. I am as mute as a fish while I'm reading.

L. Char. I know not how to express it---I am ashamed of the humour—but I cannot write whilst any one is in the room.

Mr. Softly. Hum! very probable! there is no accounting for some humours—Well—you may trust me in the closet. This closet and I have been acquainted before now. (*Offers to go in.*)

L. Char. Stay—stay—you can't go in there, I tell you, you can't, because I have a *thing* in that closet you must not see.

Enter a Servant.

Serv. There are gentlemen in the next tavern Sir, who, hearing your honour was here, hope for the pleasure of your company.

Mr. Softly. Hey day! I believe I must go to them—they are honest fellows, and always treat me to my supper.—Egad, I will go—bye, bye, Lady Charlotte, for a while. [*Exit.*]

L. Char. I'll take care to prevent all danger of a surprise (*Locks the door.*)—there—Captain, Captain, you may come out, the coast is clear.

Lady Charlotte Wisdom, Rakel.

Rak. These husbands make the most confounded long visits.

L. Char. Husbands! Why, I have had half a dozen visitants since he went away; I thought you had overheard us.

Rakel.

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Rak. Not I truly, I have been entertaining myself with the *Whole Duty of Man*, at the other end of the closet.

Lady Char. You are very unconcerned in danger, Captain.

Rak. Yes, Madam, danger is my profession, and these sort of dangers are so common to me that they give me no surprise. I have declared war with the whole commonwealth of husbands ever since I arriv'd at years of discretion.

L. Char. Rather with the wives I'm afraid.

Rak. No, Madam, I always consider the wife as the town, and the husband as the enemy in possession of it. I am not for burning or rasing where I go; but when I have driven the enemy out of his fortress, I march in in the most gentle peaceable manner imaginable. So, Madam, if you please, we will walk into the closet together.

L. Char. What, to read the *Whole Duty of Man*?
Ha. ha, ha.

Rak. Ay, my angel! and you shall say I practice what I read.—[*Takes her in his arms, (bard knocking at the door.)* *Lady Charlotte starts from him.*

Sir Nich. [without.] What, have you shut yourselves in?

Rak. Ourselves! oh! the devil, doth he know I am here?

L. Char. No, no, no, to your hole, quick, quick, quick. [Rakel exit into closet.]

Sir Nich. Why, child, Mr. Softly, don't you hear? what, have you play'd yourselves asleep?

(*Lady Charlotte opens the door.*)

Enter Sir Nicholas Wisdom.

L. Char. Oh! my dear, are you there?

Sir Nich. If we were not so nearly related, I should not like this locking up together. Hey-day! where is my Brother Softly?

L. Char. Alas! my dear, he is gone to meet some friends of his at a tavern.

Sir

Sir Nich. And what were you doing, hey, that you were lock'd in so close by yourself?

L. Char. I was only saying a few prayers, but my dear, this is very good in you to come home so soon.

Sir Nich. I only call on you in my way to the city; for I must speak to Alderman *Longborns* before I sleep. I am sorry you have lost brother *Softly*; he might have diverted you a little.

L. Char. I can-divert myself well enough in my closet for that matter.

Sir Nich. Ay, do so. I will be back with the utmost expedition: Is your closet lock'd, child? there are some papers in it which I must take with me.——

L. Char. What shall I do?——Lud, my dear, I—I—have lost the key, I think.

Sir Nich. Then it must be broke open; for they are of the utmost consequence.——Nay, if you can't tell where you have laid it, I can't stay, the lock must be broke open; I'll call up one of the servants.

L. Char. Nay then, confidence assist me——Here, here it is, child.——I have nothing but assurance to trust to; and I am resolv'd to exert the utmost

[*Opens the door, Rakel runs against him, throws him down; he looks on Lady Charlotte, she points to the door, and he runs out.*

[*Lady Charlotte shrieks.*

Sir Nich. Oh! I am murder'd.

L. Char. The incendiaries are come. My dream is out, my dream is out.

Sir Nich. My horns are out.

L. Char. Oh! my dear, sure never any thing was so lucky as this stay of yours. Heaven knows what he would have done to me had I been alone.

Sir Nich. Ay, ay, my dear, I know what he would have done to you very well.

L. Char. My dear?

Sir Nich. My Devil! come, come, confess, it is done already; am I one or no?

L. Char. Are you what, my love?

Sir Nich. Am I a monster! a husband?

L. Char.

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L. Char. Defend me.—Sure the fright hath turn'd your brain. Are you a husband? yes, I hope so, or what am I?

Sir Nich. Ah! crocodile! I don't doubt but you were concerned in writing the letter too. No one liker to extort money from a man than his wife.

L. Char. Oh! barbarous, cruel, inhuman aspersions!

Sir Nich. But tell me, is he a conjurer as well as a thief? How came he into that closet, madam, without your knowledge? answer me that? Did he go through the key-hole?

L. Char. I swear by ———

Sir Nich. Hold, hold, I don't question but you will swear through a thousand doors to get off.

Enter Servant.

Serv. Oh! Sir, this moment, as I was walking in the yard, I spied a fellow offering to get in at my lady's closet window. ———

Sir Nich. How!

Serv. Dear Sir, step but into the closet, you will find the window broke all to pieces.

Sir Nich. The villains! ——— John, take the candle and and go in before me.

L. Char. Miraculous fortune! Now, will I stand it out that Rakel got in that same way—certainly, it was Phelim who did this, to give me an opportunity of upbraiding my husband—now for it.

Sir Nich. John, do you watch carefully in the yard this night. (*Exit John.*) I protest a man will shortly be safe no where.

L. Char. Not when thieves get through key-holes.

Sir Nich. Come, I ask thy pardon; I am sorry I suspected thee: I will make thee amends. Here, here is a purse to put thy money in; and it shall not be long before I give thee some money to put in it—you shall take the air every day; Come, come, you shall forgive me, I'll kiss you till you do.

L. Char. You know the way to mollify me.

Sir

Sir Nich. Why, I was but in jest.

L. Char. Well, but don't jest so any more.

Sir Nich. Nay, I promise you :—but I must not lose a moment before I go into the city—

L. Char. And will you leave me again to-night ?

Sir Nich. Necessity, my dear, compels me.

L. Char. My dear, I shall always obey your commands without any farther reason. *(Exit.)*

Sir Nich. What a happy man am I in a wife ! if all women were such blessings to their husbands as my wife is, what a heaven would matrimony be ! yet what a deal of cares has an married man to surmount—he does not know when to believe or not—my wife is seemingly good—but what the devil brought that fellow in the closet—ay—that's the rub—

S O N G.

Like a Weather-cock's a woman's will
With ev'ry blast 'tis veering ;
Fix'd to one point, it ne'er stands still,
But, like a ship, 'tis steering ;
As the wind it blows, about she goes,
No whirling so quick ;
Do all he can, no mortal man
To one point can make it stick.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

A C T II.

*Softly's House.**Rakel and Mrs. Softly discover'd.*

Mrs. Soft. **F**ORGET that letter, it was the effect of a sudden short-liv'd anger, which arose from a lasting love: Jealousy is surely the strongest proof of that passion.

Rak. It is a proof I always wish to be without, if all my mistresses were as forward to believe my sincerity.—

Mrs. Soft. All your mistresses—Bravo.

Rak. I speak of you, madam, in the plural number, as we do of kings, from my reverence; for if I have another mistress on earth may I be——

Mrs. Soft. Marry'd to her——which would be curse enough on both. But do not think, Captain, that should I once discover my rival, it would give me any uneasiness; the suspicion of the falshood raised my anger, but the knowledge of it would only move my contempt: Be assur'd I have not love enough to make me uneasy if I knew you were false; so hang jealousy, I will believe you true.

Rak. By all the transports—By all the eager raptures——
[*Softly hears without.*]

Mrs. Soft. Oh! heaven! My husband is upon the stairs.—

Rak. A judgment fallen upon me before I had forsworn myself.—Have you no closet? no chimney?

Mrs. Soft. None, nor any way but this out of the room, he must see you—Say nothing but bow, and observe me.

Enter Mr. Softly.

Mr. Soft. Sure, never man was so put to it to get rid of a troublesome companion.—Hey-day what's here?

Mrs.

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Mrs. Soft. Sir, [To Rakel.] I assure you, I am infinitely oblig'd to you, and so is my husband; I am sorry he is not at home to return you thanks.

(*She curtsies all this time to him who bows to her.*)

Mr. Soft. What's the matter, child? what hath the gentleman done for me?

Mrs. Soft. Oh! my dear; I am glad you are come—the gentleman hath done a great deal for me, he hath guarded me home from the play. Indeed, my dear, I am infinitely oblig'd to the gentleman.

Mr. Soft. Ay, we are both infinitely oblig'd to him. Sir, I am your humble servant; I give you a great many thanks, sir, for the civility you have conferred on my wife. I assure you, sir, you never did a favour to any who will acknowledge it more.

Rak. The devil take me if ever I did: I have been as civil to several wives; but thou art the first husband that ever thanked me for it. (*aside.*)

Mr. Soft. Sir, if you will partake of a small collation we have within, we shall think ourselves much honoured in your company.

Rak. Sir, the honour would be on my side; but I am unhappily engaged to sup with the duke of Fleetstreet.

Mr. Soft. I hope, sir, you will shortly give us some other opportunity to thank you.

Mrs. Soft. Pray, sir, do not let it be long.

Mr. Soft. Sir, my doors will be always open to you.

Rak. All these acknowledgments for so small a gallantry make me ashamed: I was only fortunate in doing what no young gentleman could have refused. However, sir, I shall take the first opportunity to kiss your hands, and am your most obedient humble servant.—
Not a step, sir. [Exit.]

Mr. Soft. Sir, your most humble servant.

Mr. Softly, Mrs. Softly.

Mr. Soft. I protest one of the civilest Gentlemen I ever saw.

Mrs. Soft. Most infinitely well-bred.

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Mr. Soft. But, my dear, I have news to tell you, my brother Wisdom hath received just such another letter as yours, threatening to murder his wife in her chair the first time she goes abroad, unless she lays two hundred guineas under a stone. Indeed she shews abundance of prudence on this occasion by keeping at home: she doth not go abroad and frighten her poor husband as you do.

Mrs. Soft. I am heartily glad you have told me of it, for I owe her a visit, and on this occasion it would be unpardonable to neglect a moment.—Who's there —(*Enter Servant.*) Order my chair this instant, and do you and the other footman take to your arms.

Mr. Soft. Why, you would not visit her at this time o' night..

Mrs. Soft. Oh! my dear! it is time enough, it is not yet ten. Oh! I would not for the world, when she will be sure too that I know it. My dear, your servant, I'll make but a short visit, and be back again before you can be set down to supper. [*Exit.*]

Mr. Soft. Was ever so unfortunate a wretch as I am! All my contrivances to keep her at home, do but send her abroad the more. But I have a virtuous wife however; and truly virtuous women are so rare in this age one cannot pay too dear for her.—Oh! a virtuous wife is a most prodigious blessing.

[*Exit.*]

S C E N E, *Sir Nicholas Wisdom's House.*

Rakel and Lady C. Wisdom discovered.

Rak. To rally again the same night after such a rebuff, is, I think, Madam, a sign of uncommon bravery.

L. Char. What is it in me to lead you to that rally captain, when I must share the chief part of the danger too!

Rak. Why, indeed, Madam, to send me word of this second retreat of your husband, was a kindness I know

know but one way how to thank you for; and I will thank thee so heartily, my dear, dear, lovely angel.

Enter Phelim O'Whack.

Phel. Oh! devil burn me, but here is another woman to spoil sport—a Mrs. Softly, as she calls herself.

Rak. Mrs. Softly!

L. Char. How came she to be let in?—my orders were to be denied to every visiter?

Phel. She wou'd not believe any one you were out, except you told her so yourself.

L. Char. Well, it does not signify if she sees you.

Rak. I am tenderer of my fair one's reputation than my own—this table will hide me—and Phelim, do you also decamp. *(Gets under a table.)*

Phel. Oh, never fear me—if there is a hole at all, I'll be in it. *(goes in at an opposite door.)*

L. Char. How provoking!

Enter Mrs. Softly.

Mrs. Soft. Oh! my dear, I am exceedingly concern'd to hear of your misfortune; I ran away the very minute Mr. Softly brought me the news.

L. Char. I am very much oblig'd to you, my dear.

Mrs. Soft. But I hope you are not frighten'd, my dear.

L. Char. It is impossible to avoid a little surprise on such an occasion.

Mrs. Soft. Oh yes! a little surprise at first; but when one hath sufficient guards about one there can be no danger. Have not you heard that I received just such another letter about three days ago?

L. Char. And venture abroad so late!

Mrs. Soft. Ha, ha, ha! Have I not a vast deal of courage?

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L. Char. Indeed, I think so. I am sure I have not slept one wink these three nights.

Mrs. Soft. I have not slept much—for I was up two of them at a ball.

Enter Sir Nicholas Wisdom, Constable, Handy and Sneaksby.

Handy. I'll take my oath I saw him go in.

L. Char. Bless me, my dear, what's the matter?

Sir Nich. Don't be frighten'd, child; this fellow hath seen the rogue that was here to-day get into the house again. Mr. Constable, that is the closet-door; you have the key, therefore do you enter first, and we'll all follow you.

Hand. Ay, ay, let me alone, do you but lay hands on him, and I'll knock his brains out.

Mrs. Soft. Lud, sister, how you tremble? Take example by me and don't be frighten'd.

L. Char. Support me, or I faint!

Phelim [discovered.]

Const. You may as well submit, sir, for we are too strong for you.

Handy. Confess, sirrah! confess. How many are there of you?

Mrs. Soft. Captain Rakel's man! (*aside.*)

Sir Nich. Sirrah! confess your accomplices this moment, you have no other way to save your life than by becoming evidence against your gang. I suppose it was you that writ the threatening letter to my wife, why don't you speak? you may as well confess, for you will be hang'd whether you confess or no.

Const. Would it not be your wisest way to impeach your companions, so you may not only save your life, but get rewarded for your roguery.

Sir Nich. Is the rascal dumb? We'll find ways to make him speak, I warrant you.

Phel. May be you want to hear me speak, the devil burn me if you shall hear one word then.

Sir

Sir Nich. Sir, what brought you here?

Phel. My legs—which I intend shall carry me out again (*aside.*) Gentlemen, let me go, and I'll tell you every word of truth without one lie.

Const. Well, let's hear it, your honour.

Phel. Why, you must know—By my soul I'll give them a bit of a song to amuse them.

S O N G.

I.

Why, thunder and oons! have I nothing to do
But waste all my breath to be answering you?
I know better things, for by holding my tongue,
I'll dare you to say that my language is wrong;
And so, do you see, spite of every threat,
Not the least satisfaction from me shall you get.
You may force me and press me—I care not at all;
Because I'll say nothing but—*tol de rol lol.*

II.

Tho' here with these ill-looking rascals in pound,
I can keep silence too as well as my ground.
And should I the contrary take in my head,
Oh! faith you should feel every word that is said;
Because for one speech that is made here for you,
With a bit of shillelagh I'd make you make two;
Arragh! faith I would surely—to screech and to bawl,
And dance to the tune of my—*tol de rol lol.*

III.

Now were you to send a sweet creature to me,
'Tis then I could speak with some humour and glee;
'Tis then I could talk—by my soul I could so.
And every thing too, the dear honey should know—
I'd frankly and freely my speeches impart
Disclose my affairs with a true constant heart;
When short in my language I'd happen to fall,
I'd fill up the rest with a—*tol de rol lol.*

[*Breaks away from them, and as he is running,
oversets the table.*]

[*Exit.*]

Handy. More rogues! more rogues!

Const.

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Const. I will keep this one.

Sir Nich. This second visit, sir, is exceeding kind. I suppose, sir, this is the honest gentleman that conveys away the goods; we have stopp'd the goods, and shall convey you to a proper habitation.

Rak. Damnation!

L. Char. Ruin'd beyond retrieval.

Mrs. Softy. May I believe my eyes?

} [*Aside.*]

Sir Nich. Ladies—pray step into the next room till matters are settled—go—go. (*Exit Lady Charlotte and Mrs. Softy.*) Mr. Constable, take that fellow into the next room, while I consult with my brother Softy, who's a Justice of Peace, and who I now see coming most opportunely. [*Exit Rakel, Constable, &c.*]

Enter Mr. Softy.

Sir Nich. Brother, I'm glad to see you—I now find you do not know how to govern a wife, for—

Mr. Softy. And let me tell you, brother, you don't know what it is to have a woman of spirit to govern.

Sir Nich. A fig for her spirit—I know what it is to have a virtuous wife—and I'm the only man in town that knows how to keep a Wife at Home.

Mr. Softy. Brother, do not upbraid me with my wife's going abroad—she keeps the best company—and for virtue—for that, sir, my wife's name is Lucretia—Lucretia the second—and I don't question but she's as chaste as the first was.

Sir Nich. Yes, but you are not Solomon the second—now I should prefer a wife without legs before the finest legg'd woman in the universe—for she who won't walk will be carried—and reckoning the number of attendants—the women generally go out upon a dozen legs.

Enter Constable, Rakel, &c.

Const. Please your honours, what's to be done with this fellow?

Sir Nich. Mr. Constable, convey him to the Round-house, and in the morning you shall hear from me.

Rak. [*To Wifd.*] Sir, shall I beg to speak one word with you? &

Sir

Sir Nich. You are sure he hath no arms about him, Mr. Constable?—

Const. No, sir, he hath no arms about him except his own.

Rak. This prosecution will end in nothing but your own shame; (*apart to Wisd.*) so you had best set me at liberty: Be assur'd that I am not the person you take me for, my character will make it evident that my design was neither to rob nor to murder you; my crime, sir, will appear to be such as (Heaven be praised) our laws do not hang a man for——so, sir, consider upon it.

Sir Nich. And is this what you have to say?

Rak. Yes, sir.

Sir Nich. Oh! very well. Mr. Constable, take charge of your prisoner, but first search his pockets.—

Const. So—so—here are letters.—

Sir Nich. Show?—Read Mr. Sneakby.

Sneakby. [*reads.*] *To Ensign Rakel, Parole, Plunder.*

Sir Nich. Plunder's the word, agad!

Sneakby. *For the Guard to-morrow, Ensign Rakel, two Serjeants, two Corporals, one Drum and six and thirty Men.*

Sir Nich. Why, the rogues are incorporated, they are regimented——we shall shortly have a standing army of rogues as well as of soldiers.

Mr. Soft. Mr. Sneakby, read on, we shall make farther discoveries I'll engage.

Sneakby. Here's a woman's hand may it please your worship.

Mr. Soft. Read it, read it, there are women robbers as well as men.

Sneakby reads.

"Be with me the time you mention, my husband will be then out, and I shall want company.

C. Wisdom."

Sir Nich. What's that? (*snatches the letter.*) By all the plagues of hell, my wife's own hand, I am confounded, amazed, speechless.

Mr.

22 *A New Way to keep a Wife at Home.*

Mr. Soft. What's the matter, Sir Nicholas? Sure your wife doth not hold correspondence with these people; your wife that durst not go abroad for fear of them; who is the only wife in town that her husband can keep at home: ha, ha, ha!

Sneakby. May it please your worship, here is one letter more in a woman's hand too.

Mr. Soft. The same woman's hand, I warrant you.

[*Sneakby reads.*]

SIR, Your late behaviour hath determin'd me never to see you more: If you get entrance into this house for the future, it will not be by my consent; for I desire you would henceforth imagine there never was any acquaintance between you and

Lucretia Softly.

Sir Nich. Ha!

Mr. Soft. *Lucretia Softly!*——give me the letter.——*Sir Nicholas,* this is some counterfeit

Sir Nich. It must be so. Sure it cannot come from *Lucretia the Second*; she that is as chaste as the first *Lucretia* was.——She correspond with such as these who never goes out of doors but to the best company in town; ha, ha, ha! But I tell you what brother,——I'll go fetch my wife hither, and if she doth not acquit herself in the plainest manner, you shall commit her and her rogues together.——Ha! And here she comes.

Enter Lady Charlotte Wisdom and Mrs. Softly.

Sir Nich. Harkee, you crocodile——do you know this hand? (*to Lady Charlotte.*)

Mr. Soft. Is this letter your's? Can you deny it? (*to his wife, shows her the letter at the same time.*)

L. Char. Ha! (*starts.*)

Sir Nich. You counterfeited your fear bravely; you were much terrified with the thoughts of the enemy, while you kept a private correspondence with him.

Enter

Enter Phelim.

Pbel. Arrah, by my soul Master Captain Rakel, you are wanting to mount guard.

Sir Nick. How, a captain! And pray captain, how did you come by these letters?

Rakel. Ask my servant—he brings me all my letters.

Pbel. Ha, ha! by my soul I found them upon the toilet, and seeing no direction, I thought they were love letters, and so conveyed them into my master's pocket to surprize him.

L. Char. But pray, what can you say for yourself, sir, how came you into my house? *(to Phelim.)*

Pbel. You need not ask me, because I wont answer you—By my soul I would push my way into any place, be it ever so little or small, where there is a petticoat.

Sir Nick. And I suppose he did not write the letter, threatening to murder my wife?

Mrs. Soft. I'll prove it, if any one be convicted as an incendiary, I am afraid it will go hard with you two.—I overheard your fine plot. *(met in the middle of stage.)* Lady Charlotte, do you know this hand?—This is the threatening letter?

[Showing a letter.]

L. Char. Sure it cannot be my husband's.

Mrs. Soft. As surely as that which you receiv'd was written by mine.

L. Char. Amazement! What can it mean?

Mrs. Soft. Only a New Way to keep a Wife at Home; which, I dare swear, mine heartily repents of.

Mr. Soft. Ay, that I do, indeed; and shall think think myself very happy if you will return to your old way of living, and go abroad just as you did before this happen'd.

Sir Nick. Truly I believe it would have been to my interest to have made the same bargain.

Rak. *(cross between the old men in middle of stage.)*
Gentlemen,—Think not by any force or sinister stratagem

again to imprison your wives. Our laws are too generous to permit the one, and the ladies generally too cunning to be outwitted by the other—for be assured

If Husbands will themselves forget to warn,
Wives of their own accord will stay at Home.

Sir NICHOLAS WISDOM.

A just remark, Husbands take warning then,
Behave like brave, like unsuspicious Men;
No *Wifdoms* and no *Sofisms* need then begin
To invent new Ways to keep their Wives within.
For my own part, did I contrive my scheme
To greater reasons than some here may dream;
To keep a Wife at Home was not alone my end,
I wish to *please*, thereby to keep my friends.

F I N I S

